

Directive

4735.2

6/17/2015

UNIFORM AND IDENTITY APPAREL AND DRESS CODE POLICY

1. PURPOSE

This Directive establishes a standard dress code policy and a uniform and identity apparel program for Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) Field personnel.

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This Directive revises the dollar value of the annual allotment granted to eligible field employees for ordering uniforms, the number of hours-worked required for part-time and intermittent employees in order to participate in the uniform program, and also revises the vendor and ordering information. This Directive immediately supersedes FGIS Directive 4735.2, dated 01-17-2013. On November 1, 2015, this Directive will supersede FGIS Directive 4735.3, dated 03-02-2012.

3. BACKGROUND

The Federal Grain Inspection Service has a longstanding employee clothing program. Prior to the establishment of FGIS, the Grain Division of the Agricultural Marketing Service provided coveralls to agricultural commodity graders who performed export stowage examinations to ensure their safety and provide ready identification as Federal inspectors. In response to requests from inspection personnel and to increase the professional appearance of FGIS personnel, the Agency, in cooperation with the National Council of Federal Grain Inspection Locals, established a 1-year pilot clothing program in the New Orleans area that provided expanded clothing choices to employees. The pilot was designed to determine employee interest and obtain experience in implementing a voluntary clothing program. The pilot proved so successful that it was expanded to all Field Offices. Subsequently, the policy was revised to address specific spending limits for eligible employees and requirements for type of clothing to be worn by employees.

FGIS management believes that the safety and professionalism of its employees are of paramount importance. To this end, the Agency is issuing this Directive to establish a mandatory uniform and identity apparel program that enhances the professional appearance and safety of field personnel.

4. POLICY

It is FGIS policy that all field employees who have regular contact with our customers and the public must always present a professional appearance in the performance of their duties. A standard mandatory dress policy benefits our customers by ensuring that official services are provided by readily identified FGIS inspectors.

The current FGIS uniform program provides an annual allowance for eligible and participating employees to purchase specified uniform items from an FGIS contracted vendor. Employees eligible to participate in the uniform program include all permanent full-time (including seasonal) inspection personnel and all part-time and intermittent agricultural commodity aids and technicians who have worked for the Agency for at least 1,280 hours within the last 2 years.

All eligible employees and all intermittent employees that have been provided the uniform by the FOM's are required to follow the uniform dress code policy in performance of their duties. The uniform required is provided in the clothing catalog: polo or oxford style shirts, coveralls, sweaters, and navy, black or khaki pants (no jeans). T-shirts with the USDA logo that are provided in the clothing catalog and camouflage outerwear may only be worn during stowage exams and manual sampling performed outdoors (e.g., probing, Ellis cup, and pelican sampling; there will be no exceptions). If an employee has a bona fide sizing issue with the pants that are provided by the clothing program, please contact the FOM. All eligible employees will be required to follow all the uniform requirements by November 1, 2015.

Under the Directive, an allotment of \$300.00 is granted to all eligible field employees after the beginning of each fiscal year (approximately November 1) for purchasing uniforms from an approved catalogue that is available on the Agency's internal website. All clothing must be purchased through the clothing website by September 1st of each FY. Unused allotments will not be carried over to the next FY and are not reimbursable to the employee. Clothing that meets the new uniform requirements that was purchased in prior year's clothing program will be acceptable. Additionally, FGIS will provide up to an additional \$100 for steel toe work boots every 2 years at a maximum. Employees must purchase the boots and present a sales receipt and accompanying SF-1164 to the local FGIS manager for reimbursement of the cost of the boots or \$100, whichever is lower. Boots must be purchased and reimbursements submitted by September 1st of each FY.

On November 1 of each fiscal year (provided adequate funding is available for the uniform program) eligible employees will have internet access to the Agency-designated supplier's catalog of approved clothing and the custom order form. Eligible employees who receive their \$300 annual allotment for approved purchase are responsible for placing their own orders, making exchanges, or returning incorrect orders directly with the Agency-designated supplier. The FGIS approved clothing catalog can be viewed on the Agency's internal website at www.usda-gipsauniform.com (FGIS Clothing Catalog), after the employee has established an account. Employee ordering will cease sometime near the end of August to allow for the fiscal year ending accounting process.

Participating employees are responsible for repair and cleaning of their uniforms. Agency supplied mandatory uniforms are required to be worn only while performing official duties, including appropriate meal periods, commuting between work locations, etc.

The Field Office Manager (FOM) can purchase articles of clothing for the administrative staff at their discretion, not exceeding the \$300 limit per employee, however these employees are not required to follow the dress code. Administrative personnel are not entitled to reimbursement for shoes. Additionally, the FOM will order, on a yearly basis, additional shirts to outfit new hires and part time and intermittent employees who otherwise are not eligible to participate in the program but are required to follow the uniform dress code policy.

Employees covered under the mandatory clothing/uniform program are required to participate and must adhere to requirements as specified in the Directive. Specifically, eligible employees cannot wear jeans, etc., (see list below). Jeans are expressly prohibited because the uniform program makes various styles of pants available to uniform program participants.

Examples of Clothing That Will Not Be Permitted

- Jeans
- Excessively worn clothing of any kind
- Athletic clothing such as sweat pants, gym pants, or gym shorts
- Camouflage clothing (with the exception stated under POLICY on page two of this directive)
- Open toed shoes, or sandals
- Overly revealing or provocative attire
- Tank tops, cut off shirts, shorts, cut off pants
- T-shirts (with the exception stated under POLICY on page two of this directive)

Departures from this policy are not permitted. Employees reporting for work in unacceptable attire will be required to change their clothing before assigned work is performed. If the employee is unable to change without disrupting the flow of work, the employee may be sent home without pay or placed in leave status until the employee can return to work wearing proper attire. Repeated occurrences of reporting to work in nonconforming attire may result in disciplinary action.

Return Policy and Instructions

FGIS employees must follow the return policy and guidelines outlined by the clothing vendor. Generally, unaltered, unworn, and/or unlaundered items that do not meet expectations of quality or performance may be returned to the vendor within 30 days of receipt. The vendor will not accept returns of embroidered items, so the Field Office will have sizing examples available of several embroidered items.

For sizing issues on non-embroidered items (e.g., pants), employees may make one return/exchange per fiscal year at FGIS expense. Additional returns will be at the employee's expense.

5. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions and answers are designed to aid FGIS in interpreting the procedures contained in the directive.

Question 1: Is there room for FOM discretion? For instance if they are wearing a dress shirt, but it isn't from the clothing list, is that allowable?

Answer: Embroidered shirts that are provided through the clothing program are the only acceptable shirts. The embroidered shirts are worn to identify us as employees.

Question 2: What about special days? For instance, will employees be allowed to wear red to show support of Women's Heart Disease Awareness Day?

Answer: This will only be acceptable if the FOM designates a day/days to show support for the cause.

Question 3: Will employees be restricted from wearing purchased jackets/coats with the USDA logos embroidered on them out in public if they aren't working?

Answer: Employees are not restricted from wearing USDA embroidered clothing in public.

Question 4: Employees covered under the clothing/uniform program are required to participate and must adhere to requirements as specified in the Directive." Does "required to participate" mean they must purchase through the program - or are they just required to adhere to the requirements?

Answer: Shirts must be purchased through the clothing program with the USDA logo on them. Pants must be similar to the style and color of pants offered in the clothing program and jeans are not acceptable.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Direct any questions concerning this Directive to Sherri Murphy, Policies, Procedures, and Market Analysis Branch at Sherri.L.Murphy@usda.gov (202) 720-4684, or Patrick McCluskey, PPMAB, at Patrick.J.McCluskey@usda.gov (816) 659-8403.

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